

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.gov

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FALL FISHING HEATS UP AT CLEAR LAKE ---- YELLOW BASS STEAL THE SHOW. NO LIMITS ---- JUST ALL YOU CAN EAT.

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CLEAR LAKE - The bite is on and the word is out. Fall fishing is heating up at Clear Lake.

“Fall fishing is in full swing and we’re seeing a lot of angler activity,” says DNR District Fisheries Biologist, Jim Wahl.

“We’re seeing some very good catch rates with anglers taking several species of fish --- crappies, yellow bass, a few yellow perch, bluegills, and walleye. But there’s no question that yellow bass are the big thing right now. That’s what people are catching the most of. Yellows are stealing the show.”

During this past spring, Clear Lake’s extraordinary walleye fishing drew anglers from across the Midwest. There were block buster fishing tournaments, outdoor media blitzes, and nonstop traffic at boat ramps. Then, along about mid-June, things just stopped.

“It’s not unusual for Clear Lake to hit that mid-summer, hot weather slump,” said Wahl. “It’s also not unusual for things to fire up again later in the year. That’s what’s

happening now. But this fall it's the panfishing [instead of the walleyes] that is drawing the crowd."

When it comes to abundant populations of angler acceptable, adult yellow bass, Clear Lake ranks as Iowa's number one Hot Spot. This fall, those keeper 'stripers' are coming in two sizes. Most abundant are fish in the 9-inch class [fishermen are very happy with those] followed by some real slabbers running 11 to 11-1/2-inches.

The biggest catches of yellow bass --- and that can be anywhere from 30 to more than 100 fish per angler --- are currently coming from depths of 15 to 18 feet of water where fish are gorging on concentrations of bloodworm and other invertebrates. Best techniques include still fishing [anchored] and drifting. Most yellows are being caught on halved night crawlers. Although schools are scattered throughout the lake, the most reliable location [maybe?] is along a line running from northwest of Woodford Island straight north to the North Shore. If you want to try for a mixed bag of walleyes and yellow bass, stick to the rock reefs.

Although less than a hard and fast rule, yellow bass schools are somewhat segregated by size. If you hook a monster yellow, stick around. You'll probably catch more.

"Those giant yellows are really something," says Wahl. "You'll get as nice a set of fillets from one of those as you will a 14-inch keeper walleye."

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Editor's Note: To view current wetland habitat conditions statewide, use your favorite internet search engine to look under: Iowa Waterfowl Migration Survey. Better yet, slip into a pair of hip boots and pay a personal visit your favorite hunting hot spot.

AUGUST RAINFALL BRIGHTENS PROSPECTS FOR IOWA DUCK HUNTERS

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

In the ever changing world of duck hunting, there are no guarantees. Nowhere is this harsh reality more magnified than in Iowa where we sit smack in the middle of the flyway's north/south migration corridor. For many hunters, recent duck seasons have become something of a feast or famine proposition.

This year, it appeared as if the stage was set for famine. Although duck production across prairie Canada was excellent, wetlands across much of Iowa suffered a

deadly combo of extreme heat and little rainfall. By late summer many marshes were completely dry, while others were reduced to mere puddles.

And then the late August rains came. Torrential downpours, actually. In many regions, single thunder storms produced as much as five, six, or even more inches of precipitation. Duck hunters celebrated as parched marshland basins refilled, some in a matter of hours.

The news gets even better. While many of those Iowa marshes were drying out this summer, they had ample time to revegetate with prime natural foods such as rice cut grass, smartweed, arrowhead, and bulrush. With those nutrient rich plants currently standing in knee deep water, the smorgasbord is set for migrating ducks.

Here's the bottom line. So far as most wetlands are concerned, the water is back and the table is set. With 100 million birds currently poised to exit the northern breeding grounds, this year's duck season could be a feast.

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MIGRATING TEAL PROVIDE EARLY SEASON ACTION FOR IOWA HUNTERS

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

It's getting close. The September 22 opener of this year's duck season is just days away. With local wetlands full of water and an excellent migration predicted from Up North, it is little surprise that Iowa waterfowlers are chomping at the bit.

The first hard frosts of autumn lay somewhere in our future. And although crisp winds of October and November will bring flocks of southbound wigeon, gadwall, divers, and northern mallards, hunter success during September outings will hinge largely on the abundance [or scarcity] of a single species ---- the blue-winged teal.

The phrase "Big things come in small packages" certainly applies to this highly popular and important waterfowl. All things considered, the blue-winged teal represents the perfect kickoff to our fall hunting seasons.

One of the attributes that makes the species so important is that teal are accessible to hunters at all levels of expertise. Although blue-wings will utilize a variety of wetland habitats, they prefer shallow well vegetated marshes. Find a secluded pothole containing four or five inches of water that is covered with duckweed and surrounded by cattails, and you can rest assured that you're standing in the middle of teal country. No massive blind boats or expensive equipment required here. A light bag of decoys, a good pair of waders, and pocket full of shells are all you'll need.

On second thought, better make that *two* pockets full of shells. Although teal are trusting to a fault and regard every spread of decoys as long lost friends, they also spend most of their flight time traveling at warp speed. Combine this with the fact that teal are small [they average around a pound] and it becomes no mystery why hunters expend more ammo with less effect on teal than on any other species of waterfowl. But the rewards are well worth the effort. Whenever one of these speedsters does successfully come to bag, it's a meal worth savoring. When it comes to fine dining, no duck provides better table fare than a prime September blue-wing. Anyone who cannot convert a fat teal into a gourmet's delight should probably give up cooking.

If the blue-winged teal had an official motto, I think it would read "Here today -- Gone tomorrow". Notoriously restless, teal seldom stay in one place for long. As is true with many early season duck hunters, blue-wings like their temperatures cool --- but not too cool. In spite of mild weather and abundant food sources, many of the same flocks that migrated into Iowa during late August are already exploring the coastal wetlands of Louisiana.

Some may even be farther south. Teal banded in northern Iowa [during September] have been recovered within the month by hunters as far away as the West Indies, Central America, and South America. When it comes to high speed long distance migrations, no other species of duck or goose travels faster or farther down the flyways.

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‘MAKE A DIFFERENCE’ OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND FOR VOLUNTEERS

DES MOINES — Although school is back in session and summer has come to a close, the Keepers of the Land Volunteer Program, in the Iowa Department of Natural Resources offers volunteers many opportunities to continue to make a difference to our natural resources.

- **River Cleanup Opportunities:** Volunteers are needed for a DNR sponsored river clean-up on the Iowa River in Franklin County on September 22. For more information on this cleanup event and additional river events needing volunteer assistance during August, visit the DNR's river cleanup events calendar www.iowater.net/StreamCleanupEvents.htm.
- **Special Event Assistance Opportunity:** Members of the Friends of Pine Creek Grist Mill at Wildcat Den State Park are seeking volunteers to assist with event set-up and oversight activities at their annual Heritage Day on September 15. Assistance is needed on September 14 and 15. For more information contact Tom Hanifan at 563-263-4818.
- **Fall Operation ReLeaf Event Opportunities:** Fall tree plantings and distribution events will be held throughout September in the following counties:

Jasper (Sept. 15) and Linn (Sept. 22). Volunteers are needed to help with various event set-up and logistics needs. For more information contact Amy Oliver at 515-281-6749.

- **Prairie Management Opportunity:** Officials at the Prairie Seed Production Plot, near Adel, are seeking volunteers to assist with various prairie seed production needs including removing invasive species, harvesting seeds, and planting prairie plugs. This opportunity is available now and ends mid-October. For more information contact Bill Johnson at 515-543-8319.
- **Prairie and Forest Burn Opportunity:** Officials at Mines of Spain State Recreation Area are seeking volunteers to help with the burning of tall grass prairies, savannas, and forested areas within the park. Volunteers must be 18 years or older. Training will be provided onsite. This opportunity starts Sept. 30 and ends Nov. 1. For more information contact Wayne Buchholtz at 563-556-0620.
- **Trail Maintenance Opportunity:** Officials at Wilson Island State Park are seeking volunteers to assist with various trail maintenance activities including clearing brush and removing invasive species. Volunteers must be 18 years or older. This opportunity starts immediately and is ongoing. For more information contact Chris Anunson at 712-642-2069.

Visit the Keepers of the Land website at www.keepersoftheland.org for information on these and other volunteer opportunities. For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of September 11, 2007

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Fishing reports will be issued every other week into the fall. For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Southwest

Icaria (Adams): Several channel catfish are being caught in 3 to 5 feet of water on night crawlers or dip baits. Walleyes can be caught from the rock mounds or rock shoreline areas.

Little River (Decatur): Fishing for channel catfish is fair using dip baits.

Green Valley (Union): Channel catfish fishing is fair on stink bait or night crawlers in the bays. Some mid-sized bass can be caught from the stake beds or cedar trees.

Three Mile (Union): A few walleyes can be caught from the mounds or the creek channel. Crappies have been caught from the flooded trees in the coves.

Three Fires (Taylor): Some nice channel catfish can be caught on stink baits. Largemouth bass fishing is good near structure. Bluegills can be caught from the flooded trees or edges of the fish mounds.

Twelve Mile (Union): Several mid-sized walleye and largemouth bass are being caught from the mounds and steep rock shoreline areas. Some nice sized bluegills can be caught from the fish mounds.

Fogle Lake (Ringgold): Several nice channel catfish can be caught on night crawlers or dip baits in 3 to 5 feet of water. Some nice crappies can be caught from the flooded trees on minnows.

Farm Ponds: Channel catfish and largemouth bass fishing is good.

Contact: Gary Sobotka (641)464-3108 for information on the above area lakes.

Big Creek (Polk): Crappie fishing continues to be consistent. The most successful anglers are drifting with the wind out in the main lake. Small jigs and jigs tipped with minnows are the ticket. Fish are being caught from 8 feet to 20 feet.

Hickory Grove (Story): Bluegills are biting on jigs and bait fished around brush. A few crappies are being caught with the same technique, but pretty spotty. Some largemouth bass are being caught on plastic worms, lizards and lipless crankbaits.

Saylorville (Polk): Fishing the main lake is pretty tough right now. Try fishing the Big Creek spillway for a variety of fish. Anglers are catching catfish, drum and bass all below the spillway.

Don Williams (Boone): Bluegills are being caught on jigs and worms with a few crappies mixed in. Channel catfish are biting on liver and worms. Bass fishing is fair on top-water in the evening and plastics during the day.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Crappie and bluegill fishing continues to be steady on jigs drifted with the wind and fished around shoreline structure. Bass fishing is fair on top water in the evenings and mornings while small crank baits are picking up fish during the day.

Contact Ben Dodd (515)432-2823, Ext.108, for information on the above area lakes.

Orient (Adair): Channel catfish are fair during the day on prepared baits. Bluegills are fair using small jigs tipped with night crawlers. Largemouth bass is fair using a slow retrieve and plastic worms in the evenings.

Nodaway (Adair): Bluegills are fair, fishing around brush piles. Channel catfish are fair using liver in the evenings.

Greenfield (Adair): Bluegill fishing is fair with fish being caught around brush piles or drifting jigs tipped with night crawlers. Largemouth bass are being caught using plastic baits and spinner baits. Channel catfish fishing has been fair using liver.

Morman Trail (Adair): Bluegills are slow on south and west side of lake. Channel catfish is fair using liver around jetties and in the shallow bays in the evening. Largemouth bass can be caught on plastic baits.

Littlefield (Audubon): Crappie fishing is slow, but a few are being caught drifting a jig and minnow. Bluegills are fair casting a small jig tipped with night crawlers. Channel catfish has been fair in shallow bays and corners of the dam using stink bait.

Anita (Cass): Anglers are catching 7 to 8-inch bluegills using jigs from shore and around the jetties. Channel catfish, 2 to 6 pound size, are being caught on night crawlers

and blood bait. Largemouth bass fishing has been fair for fish up to 18 inches. Crank baits and jigs have been used around brush piles and rock piles.

DeSoto Bend (Harrison): Crappie fishing is slow. Channel catfish is fair using dip baits with a red worm.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Channel catfish is slow drifting cut bait or shrimp. Wiper fishing has been good in the evening using shad colored lures.

Arrowhead (Pottawattamie): Bluegills are fair using jigs with night crawlers. Fish are 7 to 8 inches. Channel catfish are fair using liver and prepared bait close to shore around jetties.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Fishing is fair for crappies and bluegill drifting jigs tipped with minnows or night crawlers. Channel catfish is good fishing tree piles bays with liver. A few largemouth bass are being caught using crawdad-colored lures.

Willow (Harrison): Bluegill fishing is slow with a few fish being caught on jigs tipped with night crawlers. Fishing is fair for 12 to 14-inch largemouth bass on plastic worms and crank baits.

Schaben (Harrison): Bluegills are fair using small jigs tipped with night crawlers. Largemouth bass are also being caught on night crawlers and plastic baits.

Middle Raccoon River (Guthrie): No report.

Farm Ponds are good for largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish. Be sure to ask permission from the landowner first.

Contact Bryan Hayes (712) 769-2587 for information on the above area lakes. For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 20: The Mississippi River in Pools 16 to 20 has fallen over the past week. Water levels at Lock and Dam 15 are 6.09 feet, Lock and Dam 16 at 4.99 feet, at Muscatine its 7.08 feet, and Lock Dam 17 is 6.79 feet. Water levels are forecasted to stay fairly stable over the next week. Water temperature is around 76 degrees and the water is still fairly muddy. Fishing has been fairly slow due to the falling water but some fish are being caught throughout the pools.

Channel catfish are being caught on stink baits and shad.

There have been some reports of flathead catfish being caught.

A few walleyes are being caught on the wing dams with night crawlers using a three-way rig.

Bluegills are being caught in the backwaters around **Credit Island** (Pool 16) and in **Big Timber** (Pool 17) on wax worms and pieces of crawler. There are also report of bluegills being caught in **New Boston Bay** and the **Huron Island** complex (both Pool 18).

Some crappies are being caught on minnows around **Credit Island**. Crappies are also being caught in the **New Boston Bay** area and the **Huron Island** complex.

White bass are being caught in **Pools 16 to 18** below the Locks and Dams and around wing dams.

Lake Darling (Washington): Catfishing remains good in fairly shallow water around the jetties. Bass anglers are having some good fishing using top-water lures late in the afternoons and early mornings.

Lake Geode (Henry): The road at Geode from the beach turn off by the campground all the way to the turn off at the dam on Hwy. J-20 was closed starting Monday, Aug. 27, through Oct. 1 at the earliest, and mid-October at the latest. Both boat ramps and the beach area will be closed off during this time. The only access points on the lake will be shore fishing from the dam/spillway areas, shelter 3 and shelter 4 on the south end of the lake.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): Bluegill fishing has really picked up the last couple of weeks with the fish being caught in 9 to 10-feet of water. Catfishing remains good. Try around the rip rap with green sunfish as bait.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Catfishing has been very good up by the inlet structure as it is open to let water flow through to keep the water in Odessa in good condition. The wildlife bureau is starting to manage the water level up to the fall levels.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a minnow. Channel catfish have been biting on liver and night crawlers.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a minnow. Channel catfish have been biting on night crawlers. Walleyes have started hitting on crankbaits and jig combos with evening being the most productive time.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Largemouth bass have been hitting on spinner baits fished around underwater structure. Channel catfish have been hitting on liver and night crawlers.

Lake Keomah (Mahaska): Largemouth bass have been hitting on spinner baits. Channel catfish have been biting on night crawlers.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): The crappies are stacked up in the brush piles. Use small jigs or minnows in and around the brush. Expect quite a few small to average sized fish with the occasional larger one.

Kent Lake (Johnson): Bluegills and channel catfish are being caught around brush piles. Use small worms or wax worms for the bluegills and use night crawlers or liver for the catfish, with early and late being the best time periods.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): The water level is still well above normal for this time of year. Anglers have been doing well on channel catfish and flatheads below the Oakland Mills Dam

Iowa River (Louisa): At Wapello, the river has dropped about 2 feet in the last week but it seems to have leveled off recently. If the level remains stable, look for the catfishing to pick back up.

Cedar River (Linn): Some anglers are picking up a few flathead catfish. Most of the fish caught have been just below the dams. A variety of baits have been working.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Water levels on the Mississippi River fell dramatically and have once again stabilized. Water levels were 8.0 feet at Lansing, 14.0 feet at Lynxville, Wis., 4.8 feet at Guttenberg, 8.4 feet in Dubuque, 5.65 feet at Bellevue, and 9.72 feet at Camanche. Water temperature is 76 degrees. Fishing has been slow and the water is still *stained* from the heavy rains during late August and early September.

Walleye and sauger fishing is fair in **Pools 9 to 15**. In **Pool 9**, try trolling a 3-way rig with live bait in Minnesota Slough. In **Pool 10**, fish the tailwaters of Lock 9 using *zips* and *one-eyes*. In **Pools 12 to 15**, fish along the wing dams using crankbaits and three-way rigs tipped with a leech or worm. Fishing for both species will improve as water temperature cools.

Bluegill and crappie fishing has been poor to fair in **Pools 9 to 15**. Look for panfish in brush piles and snags in the sloughs and backwaters with flowing water. Dissolved oxygen levels are still low so fish are in areas with current. In **Pool 9**, fish for bluegills using wax worms and night crawlers in the Cold Springs area near Lynxville.

Largemouth bass fishing is fair to good in **Pools 9 to 15**. Fish around snags in backwater areas such as Harpers Slough (**Pool 10**) or Cassville Slough (**Pool 11**). In **Pools 12 to 15**, largemouth and smallmouth bass were biting well on crankbaits fished along rocky shorelines, tailwater areas and wing dams with current.

White bass are feeding around exposed wing dams in **Pools 9 to 11**. Anglers are having the best success fishing with jigs.

Fishing for channel catfish and freshwater drum is good to excellent in **Pools 9-15**. For both species, use night crawlers and try fishing in areas with current around fallen trees or above the wing dams.

Northern pike fishing is fair in **Pools 12-15**. Pike concentrate in areas with cool water influx such as creek mouths and springs.

Cedar River (Mitchell, Floyd and Chickasaw): The river is still a little high, but is now fishable. Walleye fishing is fair in the deeper pools using jigs tipped with a minnow. Fishing for other species will continue to improve in the absence of rain.

Cedar (Bremer and Black Hawk) and **Shell Rock** (Butler and Bremer) **rivers**: Fishing is starting to pick up as the rivers have receded. Walleye are biting on crankbaits and jigs tipped with a minnow or night crawler. A few larger ones are being caught, but anglers report catching many smaller walleyes. Smallmouth bass are biting on white twisters, minnows, night crawlers, and jig and minnow combinations. Channel catfish are fair to good on worms or dead baits, especially when the river is rising.

Maquoketa River (Delaware): Smallmouth bass fishing is fair to good using crankbaits and jigs.

Turkey River (Clayton): Water levels have dropped quite a bit from the last report and clarity is improving. Although the river is still higher than normal, it is fishable. Smallmouth bass and walleye are fair and fishing success should continue to improve.

Upper Iowa River (Winneshiek and Allamakee): Water levels are subsiding and the water is starting to clear up. Smallmouth bass fishing around Decorah and upstream is fair. The larger fish are being caught on artificial crawdads fished near woody structure. At and below the lower dam, some walleye are being caught with a night crawler and jig. Channel catfish fishing is good using chicken liver. Fishing is excellent for freshwater drum and suckers using night crawlers drifted along the bottom.

Big Woods Lake (Black Hawk): Fishing is good for yellow bass and crappies using jig and minnow combinations.

Black Hawk County Area Lakes: Bluegill fishing is good using small jigs tipped with a wax worm. Crappies are biting in the early morning and late evening hours.

Fish a jig tipped with a twister tail or minnow in 6 to 10-feet of water over structure or close to the bottom.

Lake Delhi (Delaware): Crappie fishing is good using minnows fished under a slip bobber. Some bluegills and largemouth bass are also being caught on minnows. Fishing is starting to pick up with the cooler water temperature. Water clarity in the lake has been very good.

Lake Hendricks (Howard): Channel catfishing is good using chicken liver, stink bait, cut bait or worms fished on the bottom in 3 to 7-feet water. Bluegill fishing is fair, but improving. Try using smaller gear when fishing mid-day to hook the finicky ones. There are reports of quality of largemouth bass being caught on a wide variety of artificial lures.

Lake Meyer (Winneshiek): Fishing has slowed for channel catfish, but a few are still being caught in the afternoon in the east cove of the lake. Smaller crappies can be caught along the weed edges using white crappie jigs. Try fishing in 8 to 10-feet of water on the west side next to the weed edge. The larger crappies are being caught by trolling in deeper water. You will have fewer strikes, but larger fish using this method. Bluegill fishing is good for medium size fish on night crawlers, angle worms or white jigs fished under a bobber near the surface out past the weed line. Largemouth bass fishing has slowed, but anglers are taking a few on artificial worms.

Volga Lake (Fayette): There is an excellent population of channel catfish in this lake, with a good number of them being in the trophy-size range. Try fishing in the water that is 7 feet deep or less. Largemouth bass fishing is good in the early morning and late evening hours. Use slow moving artificial lures along structure. Bluegill fishing is fair using wax worms or night crawlers on a very small hook under a bobber.

Yellow River (Allamakee): The water level has dropped quite a bit. Although the river is a little high, it is fishable. Water level should continue to stabilize with the absence of heavy rains and smallmouth bass and trout fishing will be picking up.

Trout fishing and stream conditions are mixed; however, stockings on most streams have resumed. With the recent heavy rains, many of the crossings were damaged and are being repaired. In some cases, the stocking crews will be stocking portions of a particular stream, but may not be able to access the entire stretch of the stream.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Fish weeds and rock piles on the east side of the lake for yellow perch and bluegills. Some nice perch are being caught in Angler's Bay. Walleye fishing is slow.

West Okoboji Lake (Dickinson): Muskie fishing is good casting and trolling. Fishing is good for smallmouth bass on shallow rocks using jigs and plastics. Perch fishing is good fishing weed beds in Smith's, the North Bay and Emerson bays. Bluegill fishing is also good in many areas using small jigs tipped with garden worms.

East Okoboji Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing is starting to pick up casting near bridges.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing is good from shore casting jigs and small crankbaits.

Little Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Panfish fishing is excellent on the south end of the lake

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Yellow bass fishing is good to excellent. Fish are being caught in 14 to 18 feet of water between the Island and the north shore. Anchoring and fishing with a small leadhead jig tipped with a piece of night crawler or cut bait has been effective. Drifting with night crawlers or minnows has also been producing fish. Walleye fishing has been good. Jig fishing with a piece of night crawler on the rock reefs has been the most consistent. Billy's Reef, Gilmore Reef, Island, and Dodges Point are all producing. Drifting with spinner rigs and crawler has also produced walleyes, as well as trolling with crankbaits.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Anglers are still catching a few catfish, but fishing has really slowed down.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Channel catfish fishing is fair using cut baits, skinned chubs and chicken liver. Anglers are picking up a few crappie around docks.

Brushy Creek (Webster): People are catching a few bluegill using wax worms in 10 to 15 feet of water, just off the bottom.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

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